



NORTH DAKOTA
DEPARTMENT *of* HEALTH

NEWS RELEASE

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For More Information, Contact:
Dave Glatt
Chief, Environmental Health Section
North Dakota Department of Health
Phone: 701.328.5150
E-mail: dglatt@nd.gov

Proposed Change in Water Quality Standard Leaves Lower Sheyenne River Standard Unaffected

BISMARCK, N.D. – A proposed change in the sulfate standard of a portion of the Sheyenne River above Baldhill Dam will not affect the stream standard below the dam, according to Dave Glatt, section chief of the Environmental Health Section of the North Dakota Department of Health. Glatt testified today before the U.S. Senate Energy and Water Appropriation Subcommittee Field Hearing in West Fargo, N.D.

“The proposed change for the Sheyenne River does not change any standard downstream of Baldhill Dam or on the Red River,” Glatt said.

The proposed Sheyenne River sulfate standard change is part of a larger, EPA-required, triennial water quality standard review. “The triennial review includes changes to the existing standards that reflect the current science and status of water quality throughout North Dakota,” Glatt said.

The department is currently in the middle of a required public review and comment period set to end March 1, 2010. Upon completion of the comment period and prior to making a final decision regarding the proposed water quality standard change, the department is required to provide a written response to all comments. After the department has made a final determination regarding the standards, it must seek independent review and approval from several state boards and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

In formulating any proposed decision, whether it is concerning a permit or rule, the department must follow prescriptive legal requirements and applicable science. In the matter of the proposed change to the Sheyenne River above Baldhill Dam, the department has evaluated and continues to evaluate extensive historical and current water quality data from locations in Devils Lake, the

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600 E. Boulevard Ave. Dept. 301, Bismarck, North Dakota 58505-0200
Phone: 701.328.2372 Fax: 701.328.4727 E-mail: health@nd.gov

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Sheyenne River and the Red River to the Canadian border; biota surveys that the department has completed either on its own or in cooperation with other state and federal agencies; and water quality standards from other states previously approved by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

The department is also a strong advocate of the legislature-authorized Outlet Advisory Committee to ensure that people in the Devils Lake area and downstream of the outlet have a strong voice in the operation of the outlet, according to Glatt.

”The department is keenly aware of its obligations to the citizens of the state and also to the EPA in the implementation of the Clean Water Act,” Glatt said. “We are bound by state and federal law to thoroughly assess and evaluate each use and discharge into waters of the state for potential impacts on downstream designated uses. Potential impacts are evaluated for each specific discharge, utilizing the best available science and applicable law.”

For more information, the media may call Dave Glatt, North Dakota Department of Health, at 701.328.5150.

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